

Pending Claims

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

Listing of Claims

1. (Original) A package for containing a product, the package comprising:
 - top and bottom opposing flexible chamber sheets sealed together in a selected chamber seal zone to define a watertight chamber portion that is capable of containing the product; and
 - a hollow frame circumscribing the chamber portion and adapted to support the chamber portion when the frame is inflated.
2. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein:
 - the frame comprises top and bottom opposing flexible frame sheets sealed together at a selected frame outer seal zone proximate the perimeter of the frame and at a selected frame inner seal zone proximate the chamber portion; and
 - the outer seal zone of the frame is spaced apart from the chamber seal zone defining the chamber portion.
3. (Original) The package of claim 2 wherein:
 - a lid sheet comprises both the top frame sheet and the top chamber sheet;
 - a base sheet comprises both the bottom frame sheet and the bottom chamber sheet; and
 - the lid and base sheets extend continuously from the frame to the chamber portion.
4. (Previously presented) The package of claim 2 wherein:
 - a lid sheet comprises both the top frame sheet and the top chamber sheet, wherein the lid sheet is formed from a lid web; and

a base sheet comprises both the bottom frame sheet and the bottom chamber sheet, wherein the base sheet is formed from a base web.

5. (Previously presented) The package of claim 3 wherein:

the lid sheet is sealed to the base sheet at both the frame outer seal zone and the frame inner seal zone; and

the frame inner seal zone is coextensive with the chamber seal zone.

6. (Previously presented) The package of claim 2 wherein the top and bottom frame sheets are heat sealed together at the frame outer seal zone.

7. (Previously presented) The package of claim 2 wherein the top and bottom frame sheets are adhesively sealed together at the frame outer seal zone.

8. (Previously presented) The package of claim 3 comprising a weakness line continuously extending between the frame inner seal zone and the chamber seal zone to allow detachability of the chamber portion from the frame.

9. (Previously presented) The package of claim 2 further comprising a tear-open slit, in the form of a continuous or discontinuous cut, created in an area of the juxtaposed lid and base sheets, isolated from the frame portion and adjacent to the chamber seal zone, said slit being almost perpendicular to the chamber seal.

10. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the bottom chamber sheet is opaque.

11. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the top and bottom chamber sheets each comprise one or more thermoplastic polymer materials.

12. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the top and bottom chamber sheets each have an oxygen transmission rate of less than about 150 cubic centimeters (at standard temperature and pressure) per square meter per day per 1 atmosphere of oxygen pressure differential measured at 0% relative humidity and 23°C.

13. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the top and bottom frame sheets each have an oxygen transmission rate of less than about 150 cubic centimeters (at standard

temperature and pressure) per square meter per day per 1 atmosphere of oxygen pressure differential measured at 0% relative humidity and 23°C.

14. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 further comprising a frame inflation passageway for inflating the frame.
15. (Original) The package of claim 14 wherein the frame inflation passageway comprises a one-way valve.
16. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 further comprising a chamber inflation passageway for introducing a modified atmosphere into the chamber portion.
17. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 further comprising a modified atmosphere in the chamber portion.
18. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the frame is inflated to a pressure above ambient pressure.
19. (Previously presented) The package of claim 1 wherein the frame is inflated to a gauge pressure of at least about 0.2 bar.
20. (Previously presented) A packaged product comprising:
 - the package of claim 1; and
 - a product within the chamber portion.
21. (Original) The packaged product of claim 20 wherein the product is a food.
22. (Original) The packaged product of claim 20 wherein the product is a meat.
23. (Currently amended) A process of packaging comprising:
 - providing a base web comprising a flexible sheet material;
 - placing a product on the base web;
 - positioning over the product a lid web comprising a flexible sheet material;

sealing the lid web to the base web at a selected chamber seal zone to form a watertight chamber portion enclosing the product; and

sealing the lid web to the base web at one or more selected frame seal zones to form a hollow frame circumscribing the chamber portion and adapted to support the chamber portion when the frame is inflated.

24. (Original) The process of claim 23 further comprising folding at least a portion of the base web over the product to form the lid web.

25. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 wherein at least one of the selected frame seal zones is coextensive with the selected chamber seal zone.

26. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 wherein the sealing of the lid web to the base web at the selected chamber seal zone forms a chamber portion enclosing a modified atmosphere within the chamber portion.

27. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 wherein the sealing of the lid web to the base web at one or more selected frame seal zones forms the hollow frame enclosing gas at a pressure above ambient pressure.

28. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising introducing a modified atmosphere into the chamber portion.

29. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising inflating the hollow frame.

30. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising thermoforming at least a portion of the base web into a desired configuration before placing the product on the base web.

31. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising thermoforming at least a portion of the lid web into a desired configuration before positioning it over the product.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising severing the base web to form a package base web portion and a remaining base web portion, wherein:

the hollow frame comprises the package base web portion; and

the remaining base web portion is outside of the package base web portion.

35. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 further comprising severing the lid web to form a package lid web portion and a remaining lid web portion, wherein:

the hollow frame comprises the package lid web portion; and

the remaining lid web portion is outside of the package lid web portion.

36. (Previously presented) The process of claim 23 wherein the sealing to form the chamber portion and the sealing to form the frame are performed simultaneously.

37. (New) The process of claim 23 wherein the sealing to form the chamber portion occurs before the sealing to form the circumscribing frame.

38. (New) The process of claim 23 wherein the step of sealing the lid web to the base web to form the chamber portion encloses the product in a vacuum.